

is twenty-three feet six inches in circumference on the ground, twenty at one foot, and fifteen feet three inches at three feet from the ground. The circumference of its branches is one hundred and thirteen feet in diameter; and the measurable timber in the body of the tree is three hundred and forty-three feet; and in the arms and branches, one of which is nine feet in circumference, five hundred and twenty-nine; making all together eight hundred and seventy-two feet of timber.

PLATE XXIII.—THE ABBOT'S WILLOW.

In the class of Willow, the Withy, Sallow, and Osier, are included. Of them, as well as of the Willow itself, there are many different species, well known to planters, to whom each has its different uses; but in proportion as they are valuable to the owners of moors or marshy land, wherein they chiefly delight to grow, they are disagreeable to the eye of the painter, as they begin to be polled in the third year of their growth, and their decapitated trunks then present an unsightly spectacle, not much improved when they again sprout forth. This is particularly the case in Huntingdonshire, and parts of the adjoining counties, where the uniformity of the low, flat, and often inundated meadows, is only broken by formal rows of Pollard Willows, standing disconsolately by the sides of ditches, over which they have no branches left to bend.

Very different, however, are the feelings inspired by the sight of a Weeping Willow, hanging in all its natural luxuriance over some translucent stream, which, regardless of the caresses of its dipping foliage, reflects its image for a passing moment, and flows on, the very emblem of carelessness and inconstancy. The Willow, from time immemorial expressive of disappointed love, has furnished to our elder poets a thousand beautiful allusions. Its light and silvery foliage was supposed, in former ages, to shed a mysterious influence around, grateful to the votaries of Diana: this part of its reputation, however, is, it should seem, exploded by the more enlightened science of the present day, as we do not see it particularly resorted to, either for shade or shelter. The Willow was held in the highest estimation by the ancients, for its importance in the service of husbandry; on which account it was dedicated by them to the Goddess Ceres.

We have, however, one sacred and solemn association with this tree, which the heathens could not have; and that is the complaint of the captive Israelites:

"By the rivers of Babylon we sat down; yea, there we wept when we remembered Zion.

"We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

"For they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion."

The specimen of the Willow exhibited in the plate, is of the species termed by botanists *Salix Alba*, and is probably for size and age unequalled in the kingdom. It stands in the grounds of John Benjafield, Esq., at Bury St. Edmunds, on a part of the ancient demesne of the Abbot of Bury, and which was in the actual possession of the monastery at the time of its dissolution.

From the uncommon size of the tree, and its being called "The Abbot," conjecture may lead us to suppose that it was planted previously to the dispersion of the members of that far-famed and splendid establishment, which took place in the reign of Henry VIII. Of this, however, there is no certain proof; but its vast dimensions plainly indicate it to have been the growth of centuries. Notwithstanding the great space its spreading branches occupy, it has hitherto suffered but little either from wind or time, nor does it at present exhibit any symptoms of decay. The soil around it is certainly of a nature genial to this class of aquatic trees; for which, as Evelyn observes, a bank at a foot distance from the water, is kinder than a bog, or to be altogether immersed in the water; "for they love not to wet their feet," and last the longer for being kept moderately dry: nevertheless the Abbot's Willow may owe some of its freshness and vigour to a part of its roots communicating with the bed of a small adjoining river, the Lark, on whose bank it stands, in the vicinity of the Botanic Garden, an establishment to which the town and neighbourhood of Bury St. Edmund's are indebted for some of the most elegant and instructive of their recreations through the exertions of Nathaniel Hodson, Esq., its proprietor, whose general taste, and diligent research in botanical science, are already well known to the public.

The measurements of this tree, as taken by Mr. Lenny, an able and accurate Surveyor at Bury, are as follows. Its height is seventy-five feet; the circumference of the stem eighteen feet six inches. The two principal limbs are fifteen and twelve feet in circumference; the ambitus of the boughs is two hundred and four feet; and it contains four hundred and forty feet of solid timber.